LENIN

ON THE JEWISH QUESTION

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE persecution of the Jews constitutes one of the darkest and bloodiest chapters in the history of the tsarist empire, equalled, if not exceeded, only by the record of fascism in Germany. Previously, Russia, "the prison of nations," was considered the classic land of the pogrom. Today, the Soviet Union, a free federation of Soviet nations based upon the right of self-determination, has wiped out all national oppression and persecution; Nazi Germany has become the land of the pogrom.

The United States has no less bloody a record in regard to the Negroes. The lynch terror is the American counter-part of the pogrom; Negrophobia is even more violent than anti-Semitism. The system of segregation and Jim Crowism has penetrated every phase of American life; at every turn the American Negro is degraded, insulted, persecuted. The violent national oppression of the Negroes in the United States, as well as the resurgence and intensification of anti-Semitism, pushes the question of struggle against "race superiority" ideology and against all forms of national persecution to the forefront.

Lenin paid special attention to the Jewish question, for it played an important rôle in Russia and demanded a clear analysis and solution of the national question by the revolutionary working class party. The selection from Lenin's writings on these questions contained in this pamphlet should be an invaluable aid in meeting similar problems raised today.

For the revolutionary movement in tsarist Russia the Jewish question became especially pressing at the beginning of the twentieth century. During the period of the upsurge in the revolutionary movement which culminated in the Revolution of 1905-1906, the tsarist government as well as its supporters, the large landowners and the big bourgeoisie, propagated anti-Semitism in its most primitive and brutal form, in an attempt to retard the revolutionary movement. A series of pogroms, bloody massacres of Jews, the first of which occurred in Kishinev (Bessarabia) in 1903, was instigated by reactionaries, police-agents and clericals under the supervision of the government. After the defeat of the Revolution of 1905-1906, the "Black Hundreds"—bands consisting of reactionary petty-bourgeois and a portion of the *lumpenproletariat* bought off with money, vodka and the promise of booty, and led by police agents and clericals

—were again set loose by tsarism in an effort to root out the revolutionary movement.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks fought the pogrom terror most energetically and exposed its counter-revolutionary character, calling upon the workers of all the nations of Russia to establish the closest unity in the struggle. But precisely at this point did serious difficulties arise in the revolutionary movement. Great-Russian nationalism, anti-Semitism and the oppression of the Jews led not only to the rise of the nationalist, reactionary tendency of Zionism, but also to a separatist tendency in the reformist Jewish Socialist movement directed towards the separation of the Jewish workers from the main body of the revolutionary movement. From the beginning, Lenin fought this nationalist tendency, at the same time establishing the policy and tactics of the Bolsheviks on the national question.

"The Declaration of the Rights of the Nationalities of Russia," issued a few days after the October Revolution and signed by Lenin and Stalin, and the special "Decree on the Uprooting of the Anti-Semitic Movement," issued by the Soviet Government during the height of the Civil War, are included in this pamphlet. They show the steps immediately taken by the Soviet power to establish the right of self-determination of nations and the vigorous measures taken against all survivals of anti-Semitism left by tsarism and fanned anew by the counter-revolution.

Towards the end of 1919, after the liberation of the Ukraine and White Russia from the counter-revolutionary armies, intensive work was begun by the Soviet Government among the Jewish masses. Even at this early date, in the discussions on the Jewish question, Lenin broached the plan of providing the possibilities of an existence on the basis of productive labor to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had been forced by tsarism into a miserable and despised existence as small tradesmen, etc. Only after the end of the Civil War and with the rehabilitation of the shattered economy was it possible to enter upon a practical solution of the Jewish question. Extensive colonization of Jews as farmers took place first of all in White Russia, the Ukraine and in the Crimea. In 1929 it was decided to create a Jewish national territory, "Birobidjan," on the Amur River between its tributaries, Bira and Bidjan, and by 1930 this territory was already being developed. In the meantime, however, the First Five-Year Plan had introduced many thousands of Jews to productive labor in industry and in the general economic and social activity of the Soviet Union. The removal of economic as well as social discrimination, hand in hand with the creation of a base for Jewish national life on the foundation of Socialism, was a part of the general solution of the national question in the Soviet Union.

I

THE POGROMS AGAINST THE JEWS

ANTI-SEMITISM is defined as the spreading of enmity against the Jews. When the damnable tsarist monarchy was living out its last hours, it attempted to divert the illiterate workers and peasants into pogroms against the Jews. The Tsar's police in union with the landlords and capitalists organised Jewish pogroms. They attempted to divert the natural hatred of the workers and peasants for the exploiters towards the Jews. Even in other countries one often experiences that the capitalists stir up enmity against the Jews, in order to divert the attention of the workers from the real enemy of the working masses, capital.

Enmity against the Jews can only exist where the landowners and capitalists have kept the workers and peasants in complete illiteracy. Only entirely uneducated and completely oppressed people can believe the lies and slanders which are being spread about the Jews. These are survivals from the times of serfdom, when the priests burnt heretics at the stake, when peasants were trampled upon and were voiceless. But these dark survivals of serfdom are disappearing, the people are beginning to see.

It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the toilers. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all lands. Among the Jews there are workers, toilers; they are in the majority. They are our brothers, comrades in the struggle for Socialism, because they are oppressed by capitalism. Among the Jews there are kulaks, exploiters, capitalists, just as there are among the Russians and every other nation.

The capitalists are tireless in their endeavours to stir up enmity between the workers of different faiths, different nations and different races. The rich Jews, just like the rich Russians and the rich of all countries, are united in trampling upon, oppressing and dividing the workers.

Disgrace and infamy to the damnable tsarism which tortured and persecuted the Jews! Disgrace and infamy to whoever sows enmity against Jews and hatred against other nations! Long live brotherly faith and unity in the struggle of all nations for the overthrow of capitalism!

From a gramophone record made during the Civil War, in 1919.

II

THE JEWS AND THE REVOLUTION

. . . THE hatred of tsarism was directed particularly against the Jews. On the one hand, the Jews provided a particularly high percentage (compared with the total of the Jewish population) of leaders of the revolutionary movement. In passing, it should be said to their credit that to-day the Jews provide a relatively high percentage of representatives of internationalism compared with other nations. On the other hand, tsarism knew perfectly well how to play up to the most despicable prejudices of the most ignorant strata of the population against the Jews, in order to organise, if not to lead directly, the pogroms—those atrocious massacres of peaceful Jews, their wives and children, which have roused such disgust throughout the whole civilised world. Of course I have in mind the disgust of the truly democratic elements of the civilised world, and those are *exclusively* the Socialist workers, the proletarians.

It is calculated that in 100 cities at that time 4,000 were killed and 10,000 were mutilated. The bourgeoisie, even in the freest republican countries of Western Europe, know only too well how to combine their hypocritical phrases about "Russian atrocities" with the most shameful financial transactions, particularly with financial support of tsarism, and with imperialist exploitation of Russia through the export of capital, etc.

From a Lecture on the 1905 Revolution, delivered in Zurich.

III

NATIONAL EQUALITY

In No. 48 of the *Put Pravdy* (for March 28) the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Fraction * published its bill on "National Equality," or, as the official text reads: "A Bill to remove all limitations of rights placed upon the Jews, and all limitations whatsoever connected with descent from or membership of any particular nationality."

Amidst the alarms and agitation produced by the struggle for existence—for a crust of bread—the Russian workers cannot and must not forget that national oppression under the yoke of which are tens and tens of millions of "non-Russians" who inhabit Russia.

The ruling nation—the Great-Russians—comprise some 45 per cent of the total population of the Empire. Out of every 100 inhabitants more than 50 belong to the "non-Russians." And all this huge population of non-Russians is compelled to live under even more inhuman conditions than those of the Russian worker.

The policy of oppressing nationalities is the policy of *dividing* the nations. It is equally the policy of systematically corrupting the people's consciousness. Upon opposing to one another the interests of different nations, upon poisoning the mind of the illiterate and downtrodden masses, depend all the calculations of the Black Hundreds. Take any Black Hundred rag and you will see at a glance, that the persecution of "non-Russians," the kindling of mutual distrust between the Russian peasant, Russian lower middle class, Russian artisan, and the peasant, artisan, and lower middle class of Jewish, Polish, Finnish, Georgian, Ukrainian nationality, is the bread upon which the whole Black Hundred gang thrives.

The working class requires *unity, not disunity*. It has no more bitter enemy than the savage prejudices and superstitions which are being sown among the uneducated masses by their enemies. The oppression of the non-Russians is a stick with two ends.

* The official title of the Bolshevik group in the Russian Duma (or Parliament).—*Ed.*

With one end it beats the "non-Russian," with the other the Russian people.

Therefore the working class must express itself in the most decisive fashion against any kind of national oppression whatsoever.

To the agitation of the Black Hundreds, which endeavour to turn the workers' attention to the persecution of non-Russians, the worker must present his conviction of the necessity for complete equality, for complete and final renunciation of any special privileges for any particular nation.

The Black Hundreds are conducting a particularly hateful agitation against the Jews. The Purishkeviches try to make the Jewish people a scapegoat for all their own sins. The Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Fraction have therefore rightly given first place in their Bill to the position of the Jews.

The schools, the press, the parliamentary tribune—everything and anything is being utilised in order to sow ignorant, evil and savage hatred against the Jews.

In this black, blackguardly business there engage not only the scum of the Black Hundreds, but also reactionary professors, scientists, journalists, deputies, etc. Millions, even billions, of rubles are spent in order to poison the minds of the people.

It must be a point of honour for the *Russian* workers that the Bill against national oppression should be reinforced by tens of thousands of proletarian signatures and declarations. . . . That will best of all consolidate *complete* unity and amalgamation among all the workers of Russia, without distinction of nationality.

April 29, 1914.

IV

THE NATIONALISATION OF JEWISH SCHOOLS

THE Government's policy is saturated with a spirit of nationalism. It tries to confer every kind of privilege upon the "ruling," *i.e.*, the Great-Russian nation, even though the Great-Russians represent a *minority* of the Russian population, to be exact, only 45 per cent.

It tries more and more to cut down the rights of all the other

nations inhabiting Russia, segregate one from the other and stir up hatred between them.

The extreme expression of present-day nationalism is the scheme for nationalisation of the Jewish schools. The scheme arose with the educational officer of the Odessa district, and has been sympathetically considered by the Ministry for National "Enlightenment." What does this nationalisation consist of?

Of wanting to separate out the Jews into *special* Jewish secondary schools. In all the other educational establishments—both private and state—the doors are to be completely closed to the Jews. This "brilliant" plan is rounded off by the proposal to limit the number of pupils in the Jewish secondary schools to the notorious "percentage standard." *

In all European countries such measures and laws against the Jews existed only in the sinister epoch of the Middle Ages, the Inquisition, the burning of heretics and similar delights. In Europe the Jews have long been granted complete equality and are fusing more and more with the nation in whose midst they live.

In our political life generally, and in the scheme described particularly, apart from the oppression and persecution of the Jews, the most harmful feature of all is the striving to fan the flames of nationalism, to segregate one of the nationalities in the state from another, to increase their estrangement, to separate their schools.

The interests of the working class—as well as the interests of political liberty generally—require, on the contrary, the fullest equality of all the nationalities in the state without exception, and the elimination of every kind of barrier between the nations, the bringing together of children of all nations in the same schools, etc. Only by casting off every savage and foolish national prejudice, only by fusing together the workers of all countries into one alliance, can the working class become a force, offer resistance to capitalism, and achieve a serious improvement of its life.

Look at the capitalists! They try to inflame national strife

* According to which the percentage of Jewish children compared with the total number of schoolchildren was to be the same as the percentage of Jews in the population. The same principle was introduced by Hitler in Germany and is applied in veiled form under cover of "intelligence" examinations and "personality tests" against both Jews and Negroes seeking entrance to American universities.—*Ed.*

among the "common people," while they themselves manage their business affairs remarkably well—Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, and Germans together in one and the same corporation. Against the workers the capitalists of all nations and religions are united, but they strive to divide and weaken the workers by national strife!

This most harmful scheme for the nationalisation of the Jewish schools shows, incidentally, how mistaken is the plan for so-called "cultural-national autonomy," *i.e.,* the removal of education from the hands of the state and handing it over to each nation separately. This is not what we should strive for at all, but for the unity of the workers of all nations in struggle against *any* nationalism, in struggle for a truly democratic *common* school and for political liberty generally. The example of the advanced countries of the world—say, Switzerland in Western Europe or Finland in Eastern Europe—shows us that only consistently-democratic state institutions ensure the most peaceable and human (not bestial) co-existence of various nationalities, *without* the artificial and harmful separation of education according to nationalities.

Northern Pravda, August 31, 1913.

V

NATIONAL CULTURE

As the reader will see, my article in the *Northern Pravda* makes use of one example, precisely that of a general state language, to explain the inconsistency and opportunism of the liberal bourgeoisie, which on this issue of the national question joins hands with the landowners and the police. Everybody understands that, quite apart from this question of a general state language, the liberal bourgeoisie behaves just as treacherously, hypocritically and stupidly (even from the standpoint of liberalism) in relation to quite a number of similar questions.

What conclusion do we draw from this? The conclusion is that *every* form of liberal-bourgeois nationalism carries the greatest corruption into the ranks of the workers. It inflicts the greatest damage on the cause of freedom and the proletarian class struggle.

And it is all the more dangerous because it *masks* its bourgeois (and bourgeois-serf-owning) tendencies with the slogan of "national culture." In the name of "national culture"—Great Russian, Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, etc.—the Black Hundreds and priests, and then the bourgeoisie of *all* nations, do their reactionary and dirty work.

Such are the facts of present-day national life, if we look at the question in a Marxist fashion, *i.e.*, from the standpoint of the class struggle, if we compare slogans with the interests and policies of social classes, and not with empty "general principles," declamations and phrases.

The slogan of national culture is a bourgeois (and frequently a Black Hundred-clerical) fraud. Our slogan is the international culture of democracy and the world working-class movement. . . .

International culture is not non-national. Nobody ever stated it was so. . . . In *every* national culture there are, even if undeveloped, the *elements* of a democratic and Socialist culture, because in *every* nation there are toilers and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to a democratic and Socialist ideology.

But in *every* nation there is also a bourgeois culture (and in the majority still a Black Hundred-clerical culture), which moreover is present not merely in the form of "elements," but in the form of the *dominant* culture. Therefore "national culture" generally is the culture of the landowners, priests, and bourgeoisie. This basic truth, which is elementary for a Marxist, the Bundists leave in the shade, and in practice oppose the opening up of the class gulf in society, instead of exposing and explaining it. In practice the Bundists have become like the bourgeoisie, whose interests all demand the spreading of faith in a non-class national culture.

In putting forward the slogan of "the international culture of democracy and the world-wide working-class movement," we take from *every* national culture only its democratic and Socialist elements, and only these, and then only in contradistinction to the bourgeois culture, the bourgeois nationalism of every nation. Not a single democrat, and all the more not a single Marxist, denies the equality of language or the necessity of conducting polemics in one's own language against one's "own" bourgeoisie, or spreading

anti-clerical or anti-bourgeois ideas amongst one's "own" peasantry and lower middle class, etc. There is no room for argument about these matters, and the Bundists use these indisputable truths to conceal the real question at issue.

The question at issue is, whether it is permissible for a Marxist to put forward directly or indirectly the slogan of national culture, or is it obligatory for him to preach *against* it in all languages, adapting himself to all local and national peculiarities, advancing the slogan of workers' *internationalism*.

The meaning of the slogan of "national culture" is not determined by the promises or good intentions of the intellectual who explains the slogan "in the sense of leading through national culture up to international culture." To look at the question in this manner would be childish subjectivism. The meaning of the slogan of national culture is determined by the objective relationship between all the classes of a given country and of all the countries of the world.

The national culture of the bourgeoisie is an *accomplished fact* (moreover, I repeat, the bourgeoisie everywhere strikes bargains with the landowners and priests). Militant bourgeois nationalism stupefies, swindles and disrupts the workers, in order to lead them on a string after the bourgeoisie. That is the outstanding fact to-day.

He who would serve the proletariat must unite the workers of all nations, and struggle unwaveringly against bourgeois nationalism, both *his "own"* and foreign. He who defends the slogan of national culture has his place among the middle-class nationalists and not among the Marxists.

Take a concrete example. Can a Great-Russian * Marxist accept the slogan of a national Great-Russian culture? Of course not! Such a person would need to be placed among the nationalists, and not among the Marxists. Our business is to struggle against the national culture of the Great-Russians, the culture of the ruling Black Hundreds and bourgeoisie. Our task is to develop, in a purely international spirit, and in close alliance with

* "Great-Russia" was the term used under tsardom to denote the purely *Russian* territory of the Tsarist Empire, i.e., that inhabited by the dominant Russian people.—*Ed.*

the workers of other countries, those seeds of a democratic and working-class movement which are contained in our history also . . .

The same applies to the most oppressed and down-trodden nation, the Jews. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie—the slogan of our enemies. But there are other elements in Jewish culture and in the whole history of Jewry. Out of some ten and a half million Jews in the world, a little more than half live in Galicia and Russia, backward and semi-barbarian countries which keep the Jews *by force* in the position of an outlawed caste. The other half live in the civilised world, where there is no caste segregation of the Jews. There the great and universally progressive features of Jewish culture have made themselves clearly felt; its internationalism, its responsiveness to the advanced movements of our times (the percentage of Jews in democratic and proletarian movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews in the general population).

Whoever directly or otherwise puts forward the slogan of Jewish national culture (however well intentioned he may be) is the enemy of the proletariat, the defender of the *old* and *caste* element in Jewry, the tool of the rabbis and of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, those Jewish Marxists who join up in the international Marxist organisations with the Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and other workers, adding their mite (both in Russian and in Jewish) to the creation of an international culture of the working-class movement, are continuing (in the teeth of Bundist separatism) the best traditions of Jewry, and struggling against the slogan of "national culture."

Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism—here are two hostile and irreconcilable slogans, corresponding to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world and reflecting *two* distinct policies—and, more than that, two philosophies—in the national question. By defending the slogan of national culture, and building upon it an entire plan and practical programme of so-called "cultural-national autonomy," the Bundists *in practice* act as the propagators of bourgeois nationalism in the workers' ranks.

October-December, 1913.

VI

THE NATIONAL SPECTRE OF "ASSIMILATION"

. . . DEVELOPING capitalism has revealed two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and of national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, the creation of national states. The second is the development and multiplication of all sorts of relations between nations, the breaking down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital and of economic life in general, of politics, of science, etc.

Both tendencies are the universal law of capitalism. The first prevails at the beginning of its development, the second is characteristic of capitalism which has reached maturity and is moving towards its transformation into Socialist society. The national programme of the Marxists reckons with both tendencies when it asserts, in the first place, the equality of nations and languages, the intolerable nature of any *privileges* whatsoever in this respect (and likewise the right of nations to self-determination of nations, of which more later), and, secondly, the principle of internationalism and irreconcilable struggle against the infection of the proletariat with bourgeois nationalism, even the most refined.

What, then, is the Bundist talking about when he shouts to heaven against "assimilation"? He *could not* be referring to violence against nations, or to *privileges* of one of the nations, since "assimilation" would not be the right word in that connection at all—for all Marxists, both individually and as an official united whole, have quite definitely and unambiguously condemned the very least national violence, oppression or inequality. . . . But does anything real remain in the conception of assimilation after excluding any violence and any kind of inequality?

Unquestionably yes! There remains that universal historical tendency of capitalism to smash down national barriers, to erase national differences, to *assimilate* nations, which with each decade shows itself more powerfully, and which constitutes one of the greatest motive forces transforming capitalism into socialism.

He who does not acknowledge and defend the equality of nations

and languages, he who does not fight against all forms of national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist nor even a democrat. That is certain. But it is just as certain that he who pretends to be a Marxist, but violently attacks the Marxist of another nation for "assimilation" in practice, is just a *petty bourgeois nationalist*. . . .

The people who are shouting most against the *"assimilationism"* of the *Russian orthodox Marxists* * are the Jewish nationalists in Russia, and in particular *the Bundists*. Yet, as can be seen from previously quoted figures, out of ten and a half million Jews in the world about half live in the *civilised* world, in conditions of the greatest "assimilation," while only the unfortunate, downtrodden, outlawed Jews of Russia and Galicia (crushed by the Purishkeviches,** Russian and Polish), live in conditions of the *least* "assimilation," the greatest segregation, including "Pales," "percentage standards," and other reactionary delights.

The Jews in the civilised world are not a nation, they have become most of all assimilated, affirm Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer. The Jews in Galicia and Russia are not a nation, they unfortunately (and not through their fault, but owing to the Purishkeviches) are still a *caste*. This is the unquestioned conclusion of people who are unquestionably well informed on the history of the Jews.

What do these facts indicate? They indicate that "assimilation" can be denounced only by the Jewish reactionary petty bourgeois, who wish to turn back the wheel of history, and to force it to move, not from the conditions of Russia and Galicia to the conditions of Paris and New York, but in the opposite direction. . . .

There are two nations in every modern nation, we say to all the National-Socialists. There are two national cultures in every national culture. There is the Great-Russian culture of Purishkevich, Guchkov and Struve—but there is also the Great-Russian culture characterised by the names of Chernishevsky and Plekhanov. There are just the same two cultures in Ukrainia as there

* An "Esopian" term, used to deceive the police censor, for "Bolsheviks." —*Ed.*

** The notorious reactionary.—*Ed.*

are in Germany, France, England, among the Jews, etc. If the majority of the Ukrainian workers are under the influence of Great-Russian culture, we know for certain that, side by side with the ideas of Great-Russian priestly and bourgeois culture, there are also at work the ideas of Great-Russian democracy and social-democracy. Fighting against the first kind of "culture," the Ukrainian *Marxist* will always distinguish it from the second culture and say to his fellow-workers: "Every opportunity of contact with the Great-Russian class-conscious worker, with his literature, with his outlook, must be seized upon with all energy, utilised, consolidated. For this is required by the vital interests of *both* the Ukrainian *and* the Russian workers' movement."

If the Ukrainian Marxist allows himself to be stampeded by *quite legitimate and natural* hatred of the Great-Russian oppressors into transferring even a tiny part of that hatred—even in the form of estrangement—to the proletarian culture and proletarian cause of the Great-Russian workers, that Marxist will slip down by that very act into the swamp of bourgeois nationalism. And similarly the Great-Russian Marxist will slip into the swamp of not merely bourgeois but even Black Hundred nationalism, if he forgets even for a moment the demand for full equality of the Ukrainians, or their *right* to set up an independent state. . . .

October-December, 1913.

VII

CULTURAL-NATIONAL AUTONOMY

THE question of the slogan of "national culture" is of vast importance for Marxists, not only because it determines the ideas contained in all our propaganda and agitation on the national question, as distinct from the propaganda of the bourgeoisie, but also because the entire programme of the notorious cultural-national autonomy has been built up out of this slogan.

The basic error of principle in this programme is that it endeavours to embody the most refined and most absolute nationalism carried to its logical conclusions. The essence of this programme is, that every citizen should be registered as a member

of this or that nationality, and every nation should constitute a legal whole, with the right to impose taxation upon its members, with the right to have a national Parliament and national "state secretaries."

Such an idea applied to the national question resembles the idea of Proudhon as applied to capitalism. Not the destruction of capitalism and of its foundation—commodity production—but its purification from abuses, excrescences, etc.; not the abolition of exchange and exchange value, but, on the contrary, making it "constitutional," universal, absolute, *"just,"* freed from waverings, crises, abuses—this was the idea of Proudhon. Just as Proudhon is petty-bourgeois, just as his theory makes an absolute of exchange and commodity production, so equally petty-bourgeois is the theory and programme of "cultural-national autonomy" which makes an absolute and a quintessence of bourgeois nationalism, purifying it of violences and injustices, etc.

Marxism is irreconcilable with nationalism, be it ever so "just," "clean," refined and civilised. Marxism puts forward internationalism to replace all forms of nationalism, the fusion of all nations into a highest unity, which we can see growing, under our very eyes, with every mile of railway that is being built, every international trust, with every workers' union (international in its economic activity, and then in its ideas and aims).

The principle of nationality was historically inevitable in bourgeois society, and, reckoning with the latter, the Marxist fully acknowledges the historical legitimacy of the national movements. But in order that this acknowledgement may not be turned into an apology for nationalism, it is necessary to limit it most strictly to that which is progressive in these movements—so that this recognition should not obscure proletarian consciousness with bourgeois ideology.

The progressive awakening of the masses from feudal sleep, their struggle against all forms of national oppression, for national sovereignty—this is necessary. But arising from this is the *absolute* necessity for every Marxist to fight for the most resolute and consistent democracy in all spheres of the national question. This task is in the main of a negative character. But further the proletariat cannot go in the support of nationalism; for further begins

the "positive" activity of the *bourgeoisie,* which strives to *strengthen* nationalism.

To overthrow every feudal yoke, every oppression of a nation, every privilege, for one particular nation or one language, is the undoubted duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, undoubtedly to the interest of the proletarian class struggle, which is confused and retarded by national strife. But to assist bourgeois nationalism *beyond* this limit—rigidly determined and placed within a definite historical framework—means betraying the proletariat and taking the side of the bourgeoisie. . . .

A struggle *against* all forms of national oppression—unquestionably, yes! A struggle *for* every kind of national development, *for* "national culture" in general—unquestionably, no! . . .

There cannot be the slightest doubt that "national culture" in the accepted sense of the word, *i.e.,* the schools, etc., at the present time is under the predominating influence of the priests and bourgeois jingoes in all countries of the world. When the Bundists are defending "cultural-national" autonomy, they say that the constituting of nations as separate units makes the class struggle inside them *free* from any outside considerations. But this is obvious and ridiculous sophistry. A serious class struggle in any capitalist society is carried on in the first place in the economic and political spheres. To separate the schools from these is, in the first place, a stupid utopia, since the schools (like "national culture" generally), cannot be separated from economics and politics, and, secondly, it is precisely the economic and political life of the capitalist countries which *forces* us at every step to break down the senseless and obsolete national divisions and prejudices, while the separation of education, etc., would preserve, intensify and strengthen "pure" clericalism and "pure" bourgeois jingoism.

One example and one plan of "nationalisation" of the schools clearly explains the essence of this matter. In the United States the separation into northern and southern states is still maintained. The former have the greatest traditions of freedom and of struggle against the slave owners; the latter maintain the greatest traditions of slave owning, with relics of persecution of Negroes, of their economic oppression, cultural retardation (44%

of the Negroes are illiterate in comparison with 6% of the whites), etc. And yet in the northern states the Negroes study together with the whites in the same schools. In the South there are special "national," or if you please, race schools for Negroes. Apparently this is the only example of "nationalisation" of schools actually existing.

. . . It was not the Austrian or Russian Social-Democrats that introduced "cultural-national" autonomy into their programme. But the bourgeois parties of Jewry in the most backward country of all, alongside a number of petty-bourgeois allegedly-Socialist groups, adopted it in order to carry the ideas of bourgeois nationalism, in their most refined form, into the ranks of the workers. This fact speaks for itself.

October-December, 1913.

VIII

SEPARATISTS IN RUSSIA AND SEPARATISTS IN AUSTRIA

AMONG the various representatives of Marxism in Russia the Jewish, or, to be more exact, some of them—those known as the Bundists—are carrying out a policy of *separatism*.

From the history of the working-class movement it is known that the Bundists *left the Social-Democratic Party* in 1903, when the majority of the Party of the working class refused to accept their demand to be recognised as the "sole" representatives of the Jewish proletariat.

This exit from the Party was a manifestation of separatism deeply harmful to the working-class movement. But, in fact, the Jewish workers have entered and continue to enter the Party everywhere in spite of the Bund. Side by side with the *separate* organisations of the Bundists, there have *always* existed *general* organisations of the workers—Jewish and Russian, Polish and Lithuanian, and Lettish, etc.

From the history of Marxism in Russia we know, furthermore, that when the Bund in 1906 again returned to the Party, the Party put forward the condition of no separatism, *i.e.*, unity in all

localities of *all* the Marxist workers of *whatever* nationality. But this condition *was not fulfilled* by the Bundists, despite its special confirmation by a special decision of the Party in December, 1908.

That, shortly, is the history of Bundist separatism in Russia. Unfortunately, it is little known to the workers, and little thought is given to it. Those having the closest practical acquaintance with this history are the Polish Marxists, the Lithuanian (especially in Vilna in 1907), the Lettish (at that time and in Riga), and those of South and Western Russia. It is well known, moreover, that the Caucasian Marxists, including *all* the Caucasian Mensheviks, have until quite recently displayed local *unity* and even fusion of the workers of all nationalities, and have condemned the separatism of the Bundists.

We should also note that the prominent Bundist, Medem, in the well-known book, *Forms of the National Movement* (1910), admits that the Bundists have never brought about unity in the localities, *i.e.*, they have always been separatists.

In the international working-class movement, the question of separatism came to the front most urgently in 1910, at the Copenhagen Conference. The Czechs came forward as separatists in Austria, and destroyed the former unity that existed between the Czech and German workers. The International Congress at Copenhagen *unanimously* condemned separatism, but the Czechs have unfortunately remained separatists right up to the present.

Feeling themselves lonely in the proletarian International, the Czech separatists have long and fruitlessly sought supporters. Only now they have found them—in the person of the *Bundists and liquidators*. . . . Unanimously condemned by the International, the Czech separatists cling to the skirts of the liquidators and Bundists.

Only that complete unity (in every locality, and from top to bottom) of the workers of all nations, which has existed so long and so successfully in the Caucasus, corresponds to the interests and tasks of the workers' movement.

May 21, 1913.

I

SOVIET GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHES EQUALITY OF NATIONS AND FIGHTS NATIONAL PREJUDICE

Declaration of the Rights of the Nationalities of Russia

The October Revolution of the workers and peasants started under the general slogan of freedom.

The peasants have been freed from the rule of the landlords, for large landownership no longer exists—the soil has become free. The soldiers and sailors have been freed from the power of the sovereign generals, for the generals are now elective and removable. The workers have been freed from the caprice and tyranny of the capitalists, for from now on the control of the enterprises and factories by the workers has been established. All that is living and vital has been freed from hated bondage.

Now there remain only the nationalities of Russia, who have suffered and still suffer from oppression and tyranny. Their freedom must immediately be worked for, and it must be brought about resolutely and irrevocably.

During the times of tsarism the nations of Russia were systematically instigated against each other. The results of this policy are known: massacres and pogroms on the one hand, the enslaving of nations on the other hand.

This hideous policy of rousing hatred must and will never return. From now on it will be replaced by the policy of voluntary and honest unions of nations.

In the period of imperialism, after the February Revolution, when political power passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie represented by the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the open policy of instigation was replaced by a policy of cowardly mistrust towards the nations of Russia, a policy of molestation and provocation which was covered with verbose declarations about the "freedom" and "equality" of nations. The results of this policy are known: the sharpening of national enmity, the undermining of mutual trust.

This unworthy policy of lies and mistrust, of molestation and

provocation, must be ended. From now on it must be replaced by a frank and honest policy leading to complete mutual trust between the nations in Russia.

Only on the basis of such trust can an honest and firm union of the nations of Russia be formed.

Only on the basis of such a union can the workers and peasants of the nations of Russia be merged into a single revolutionary force, able to withstand all the attacks of the imperialist, annexationist bourgeoisie.

In June of this year the Congress of Soviets proclaimed the free right of self-determination of the nations of Russia.

The second Congress of Soviets, which met in October, even more resolutely and definitely established this inalienable right of the nations of Russia.

Acting on the decisions of this Congress, the Council of People's Commissars plans to base its actions in regard to the nationalities of Russia on the following principles:

1. The equality and sovereignty of the nations of Russia.

2. The right of the nations of Russia to free self-determination including separation and the formation of independent states.

3. The removal of every and any national and national-religious privilege and restriction.

4. The free development of the national minorities and ethnographic groups living within the confines of Russia.

Corresponding concrete provisions will be worked out as soon as the Commission of Nationalities is established.

In the name of the Russian Republic: *Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars,* V. Ulyanov (Lenin); *People's Commissar of Nationalities,* Joseph Djugashvili (Stalin).

November 15, 1917.

II

Decree of the Council of People's Commissars on the Uprooting of the Anti-Semitic Movement

According to reports received by the Council of People's Commissars, the counter-revolutionaries are carrying on agitation for pogroms in many cities especially in the frontier zone, as a result

of which there have been sporadic outrages against the toiling Jewish population. The bourgeois counter-revolution has taken up the weapon which has slipped from the hands of the Tsar.

The absolutist government, when the need arose, turned the hatred of the peoples directed at itself against the Jews, at the same time telling the uneducated masses that all their misery comes from the Jews. The rich Jews, however, knew how to protect themselves; only the Jewish poor always suffered from instigation and violence, only they fell victims of them.

The counter-revolutionaries have now renewed hatred against the Jews, using hunger, exhaustion and also the backwardness of the most retarded masses as well as the remnants of that hatred against the Jews which was planted among the people by absolutism.

In the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, where the principle of self-determination of the toiling masses of all nations has been proclaimed, there is no room for national oppression. The Jewish bourgeois are our enemies, not as Jews but as bourgeois. The Jewish worker is our brother.

Any kind of hatred against any nation is inadmissible and shameful.

The Council of People's Commissars declares that the anti-Semitic movement and pogroms against the Jews are fatal to the interests of the workers' and peasants' revolution and calls upon the toiling people of Socialist Russia to fight this evil with all the means at their disposal.

National hostility weakens the ranks of our revolutionaries, disrupts the united front of the toilers without distinctions of nationality and helps only our enemies.

The Council of People's Commissars instructs all Soviet deputies to take uncompromising measures to tear the anti-Semitic movement out by the roots. Pogromists and pogrom-agitators are to be placed outside the law.

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, ULYANOV (LENIN); *Secretary of the Council,* N. GORBUNOV.

August 9, 1918.

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